

ADI (rank)	1986 households (000)			ADI (rank)	1986 households (000)		
	ABC	CBS	NBC		ABC	CBS	NBC
Wheeling, W.Va.-Steubenville, Ohio (124)	—	48	46	Wilmington, N.C. (151)	33	8	61
Wichita-Hutchinson, Kan. (59)	51	74	66	Yakima, Wash. (123)	20	33	27
Wichita Falls, Tex.-Lawton, Okla. (126)	24	27	27	Youngstown, Ohio (92)	44	57	62
Wilkes Barre-Scranton, Pa. (58)	105	64	93	Zanesville, Ohio (201)	—	—	11

## Ampex, Sony join forces on video recording front

**But Matsushita isn't taking the news lying down; it may have NBC as trump card in planned introduction of new half-inch M-II format**

An unexpected alliance between Sony and Ampex—the two largest sellers of broadcast video recorders—has turned the long-escalating rivalry over small-format video between Sony and fellow Japanese manufacturer Matsushita into a full-scale war which could well encompass the entire range of broadcast video recorder formats.

In announcements made in anticipation of next week's National Association of Broadcasters annual equipment exhibition in Dallas, Ampex said last Thursday it had agreed to license Sony's Betacam half-inch video format and design equipment to an enhanced version of Betacam dubbed "SP." Sony also said Thursday it will join Ampex in standardizing an Ampex-developed composite digital technology and intends to build studio videotape recorders to the format.

Ampex representatives described the agreements as a "cross-licensing arrangement of sorts," and the agreements appeared to carry the elements of a mutual arrangement, with Ampex receiving support for its controversial nonstandard composite digital technology (international standards efforts have centered on component digital) in return for providing Sony's Betacam with a critical second source with which to increase its domination of the still slow-growing small-format market.

A Sony spokesman denied, however, that the agreements between the two companies, which together already are believed to control as much as 80%-90% of the U.S. broadcast videotape recording market, were related, and said the timing of the announcements was purely "coincidental."

For a brief period following the announcement, it appeared Matsushita could be outflanked by the two companies, just as its U.S. arm Panasonic was preparing the release of first details on its new half-inch M-II format product family. M-II is to be marketed both as a newsgathering tool and as a studio product to replace the commonly used one-inch Type C studio format.

But Matsushita, Japan's largest corporation, appears to remain determined to penetrate the U.S. broadcast market and may have found what could become a powerful foothold with which to win penetration in the U.S. market. NBC's Michael Sherlock, executive vice president of operations and technical services, told BROADCASTING last Friday that the network expects to end its 18-month search for a new video format this week and gave strong indications it is lean-

ing toward the selection of M-II to fulfill its desire for a "universal" video format.

M-II is of little interest as a video format to Capacities/ABC, however, according to Julius Barnathan, president, Broadcasting Operations and Engineering. Barnathan instead praised the Ampex-Sony announcements as "wonderful" and "healthy for the marketplace," and although he said the network had made no commitment to Betacam, he seemed greatly encouraged there were now two manufacturers of the format. (One network, CBS, already decided last year to purchase Betacam equipment from Sony.)

Matsushita is making its own effort to find additional sources to manufacture its M-II line, which will initially include a studio and field recorder and camera available next fall and a portable field edit package available in 1987. At least one manufacturer, JVC, of which Matsushita owns a controlling interest, will affiliate with the company to manufacture and market the gear.

The Ampex decision to re-enter the half-inch arena was apparently prompted by developments of an enhanced version of Betacam, which Sony plans to demonstrate in a prototype version at a technology exhibit at NAB next week. Earlier in the 1980's, Ampex marketed Matsushita-manufactured camera-recorders using M-II's precursor, M-format, but it sold few, if any, of the units, and has since argued half-inch could serve only as an "interim" format.

Mark L. Sanders, vice president and general manager of Ampex Audio-Video Systems Division, told reporters at a press conference in New York last Thursday that, based on the enhanced version of Betacam,

"Ampex has become convinced that Betacam is the format of choice." Ampex still maintains, however, that half-inch is an "interim" format and that Sony would agree—eight millimeter digital will ultimately be the industry's standard small format.

Although Sony's worldwide sales of Betacam have reached 25,000 units, with 5,000 to 6,000 sold in the U.S. market for an estimated 16% penetration of the ENG market, Sanders said the existing three-quarter-inch U-matic format has remained "ubiquitous," primarily because, despite the advantages of new formats, there have been "too many choices."

The Betacam SP (superior performance), like Matsushita's M-II, will use a metal particle video tape formulation in place of existing metal oxide tape, gaining improvements in cassette play time, luminance (monochrome) bandwidth and signal-to-noise ratio. But unlike M-II, which is incompatible with Matsushita's M-format products, the new Betacam SP and existing Betacam products are essentially interchangeable, with SP tapes playable on both lines and the only limitations being the inability of Betacam to record or edit on SP tapes.

In order to maintain that compatibility, however, some say Sony has had to make certain trade-offs for the format that Matsushita did not—for example, Sony's Betacam SP long-playing 90-minute cassette is apparently larger in size than the standard cassette used by M-II and so less likely to be appropriate for field use.

Sony has set its goal for production models of Betacam SP for 1987, although it has not yet decided how broad the product line



**Format foray.** Sanders of Ampex (at podium) announcing video format agreements at press conference in New York last week. Also present from Ampex were (l-r) Michael D'Amore, director of worldwide marketing, Joachim (Jock) Diemann, business manager, video recording, and Philip Ritti, director of marketing, Magnetic Tape Division.